

## After The Flu

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You just got slammed by a mean case of the flu. Your immune system has taken a real beating and is still vulnerable to attack. Two weeks of rest, fresh fruits, seafood, and the low pressure of a Hawaiian beach are probably out of the question. Instead, it is back to work where you are in close contact with patients all day: patients who cough; patients who sneeze; patients who forget to wash their hands; and patients who harbor all kinds of germs looking for a new home.

When you get the flu, you need to recover quickly. Here are my recommendations:

1. **Hydrate:** Your fluid needs increase due to the sweat you lose with a fever. It's likely that your food and fluid intake are inadequate when you're sick. Thus, it is likely that you will be dehydrated. You also need the extra fluids to help flush the abnormal metabolites your system has accumulated. Drink an extra 40-60 ounces of pure water above what you would normally imbibe. It is also a good idea to hop on the scale and see how much weight you lost during your illness. The majority of your deficit is fluid.
2. **Reinoculate:** A high fever will do a number on your intestinal flora. If you were vomiting or took antibiotics, your bacteria have been further insulted. If you do not supplement with a probiotic, your recovery will be lengthened. To reinoculate your bowel, take at least three billion active lactobacillus microflora daily. Choose combination products that contain multiple strains such as acidophilus, bifidus and bulgaricus.
3. **Vitamins:** It is no surprise that your needs temporarily increase during recovery. Elevate B complex to 100 mg with extra pantothenic acid (500 mg for adrenal support). If you already take 400 IU of vitamin E, you are covered. Elevate your vitamin C to between 15 and 20 mg per pound of body weight. Bioflavonoids and proanthocyanidins work well with vitamin C. They are powerful antioxidants and membrane supporters. Take 500 mg of bioflavonoids and 100 mg of proanthocyanidins.
4. **Minerals:** Shoot for the RDA levels of minerals (which can be a challenge for calcium and magnesium). Increase your zinc intake to 40-50 mg per day.
5. **Proteins and Amino Acids:** The high-quality whey proteins available on the market promote the proliferation of "good bacteria" in the gut. They contain bioactive peptides that have both antiviral and antibacterial properties. Whey is also very high in essential branch chain amino acids and is important in the production of glutathione (a tri-peptide that is a very powerful component of our immune system).

Arginine has been in the news recently for hypertension, erectile dysfunction and heart disease. Arginine also stimulates the immune system. Add 3-6 grams to your protein shake or eat lots of chicken soup, which is a great source of arginine. If you suffer from herpes outbreaks, make sure you also take lysine.

6. Foods: Stay away from stressors such as alcohol, caffeine and sugar. I found one 1973 paper (AJCN 26:1180-1184) that tested 100-gram servings of fructose, sucrose, honey and orange juice on how they affect cellular immunity. The results revealed that the capacity of neutrophils to engulf bacteria was decreased for 1-2 hours after absorption of these highly concentrated simple carbohydrates.
7. Herbs: Echinacea is now the largest-selling herb in the United States. It improves our white blood cells' ability to battle infection. Germany's Commission E Monographs (the best object of analysis of herbs by an independent multidisciplinary channel of scientists, allopathic, and alternative practitioners currently available) recommends supplementation as soon as you start to feel sick. The commission also states that echinacea should not be used continuously for more than three weeks at a time.

Goldenseal contains chemicals that prevent the growth of viruses, fungi and bacteria. It is often combined with echinacea in immune system formulas. In the October 1999 issue of the University of California, Berkeley *Wellness Letter*, the editors advised against the use of goldenseal due to its "unpredictable action" and potential side effects that include respiratory failure. This statement was not referenced with a specific study, and this publication is known to be quite conservative when it comes to supplements. In his 1999 book *A Consumer's Guide to Herbal Medicine*, Dr. Steven Karch states there have been no reports of goldenseal causing serious toxicity. Dr. Karch further states that due to the tremendous amount of goldenseal sold in the United States, the lack of good studies is "distressing."

Elderberry is a rich source of quercetin and rutin. Elderberry has also reduced flu symptoms and shortened recovery time in humans. In a 1995 article in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* [1995:1(4) 361-369], elderberry extract ingestion produced more antiviral antibodies in humans than the placebo preparation.

#### Herbal Dosing:

Due to different potencies, raw material sources, and manufacturing techniques, it is impossible to give advice that is both safe and therapeutic without knowledge of the specific preparation. Thus, products should be used according to the recommendation of the company that produces the supplements you choose. As the use of herbal medicine increases, I hope to see industry-wide standardization.

8. Energize: After a significant viral insult, it is not uncommon to suffer from postviral fatigue. Coenzyme Q10 (.75 mg per pound of body weight), potassium and magnesium aspartates (1-3 grams per day) and ribose (2 grams per day) can kick-start your intramitochondrial energy systems if you still feel drained after your fever and body aches subside.

#### SUMMARY

A good case of the flu really stresses one's system. Start the program as soon as your stomach allows. Follow recommendations one through six for three to four days for each day you have a fever. The seventh recommendation, herbs, is best used during your illness and for two or three days following it. Finally, if you have postviral fatigue, follow recommendation number eight for two to four weeks. If your energy is still low, after one month seek a second opinion.

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